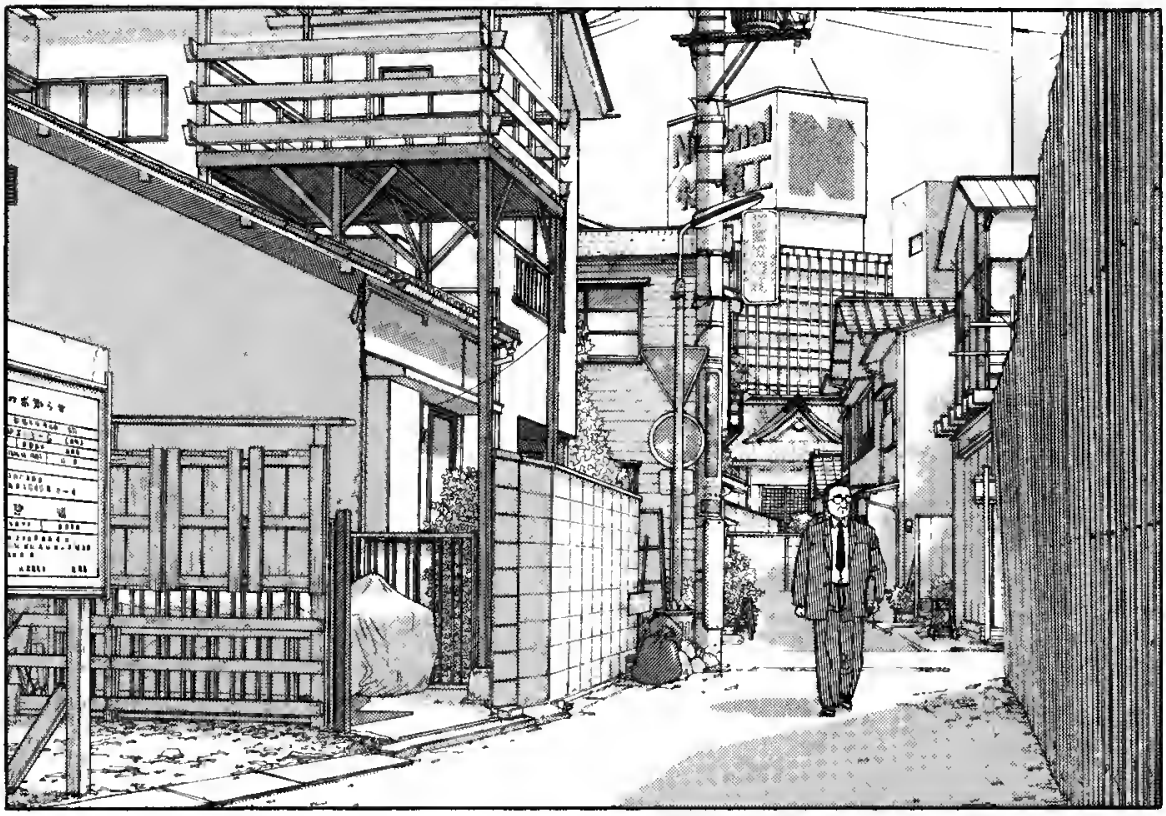
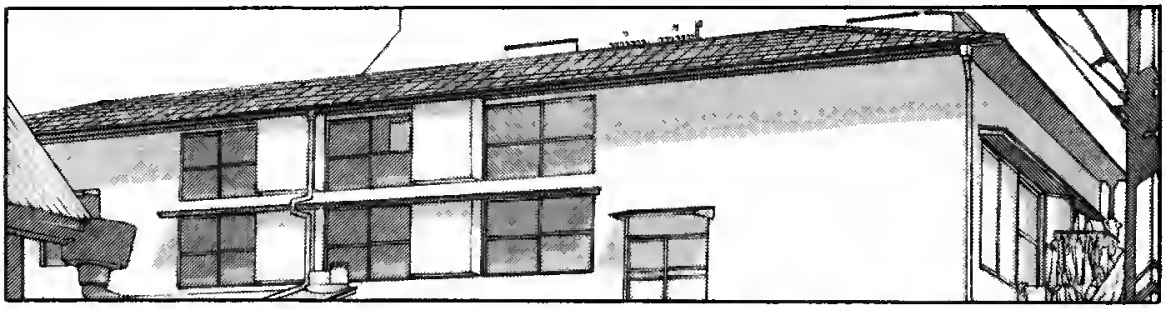
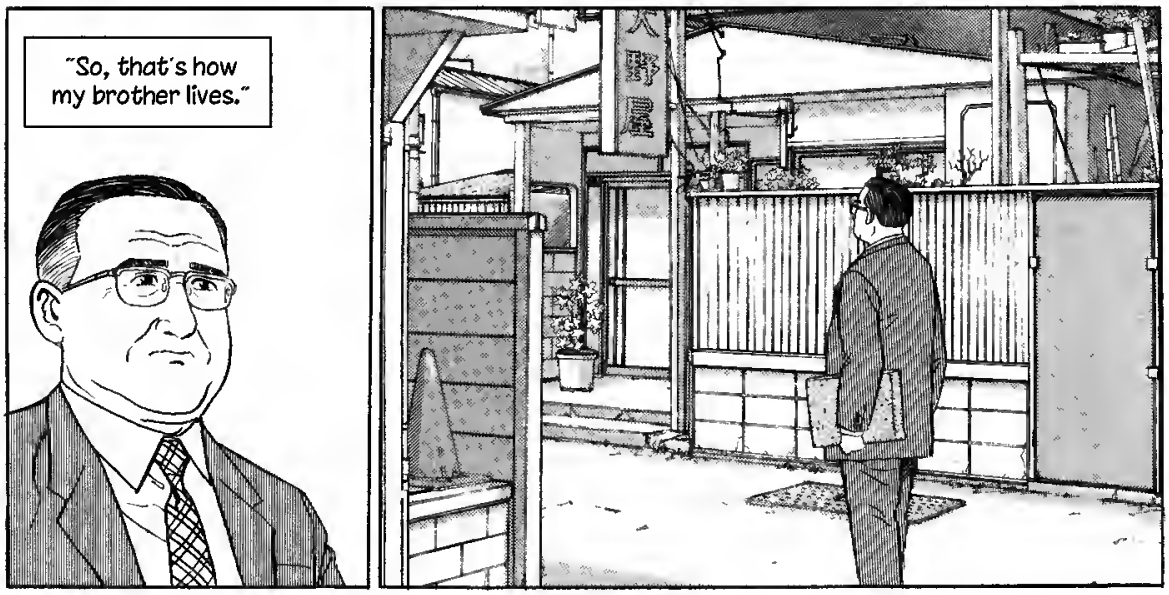
My Brother's Life

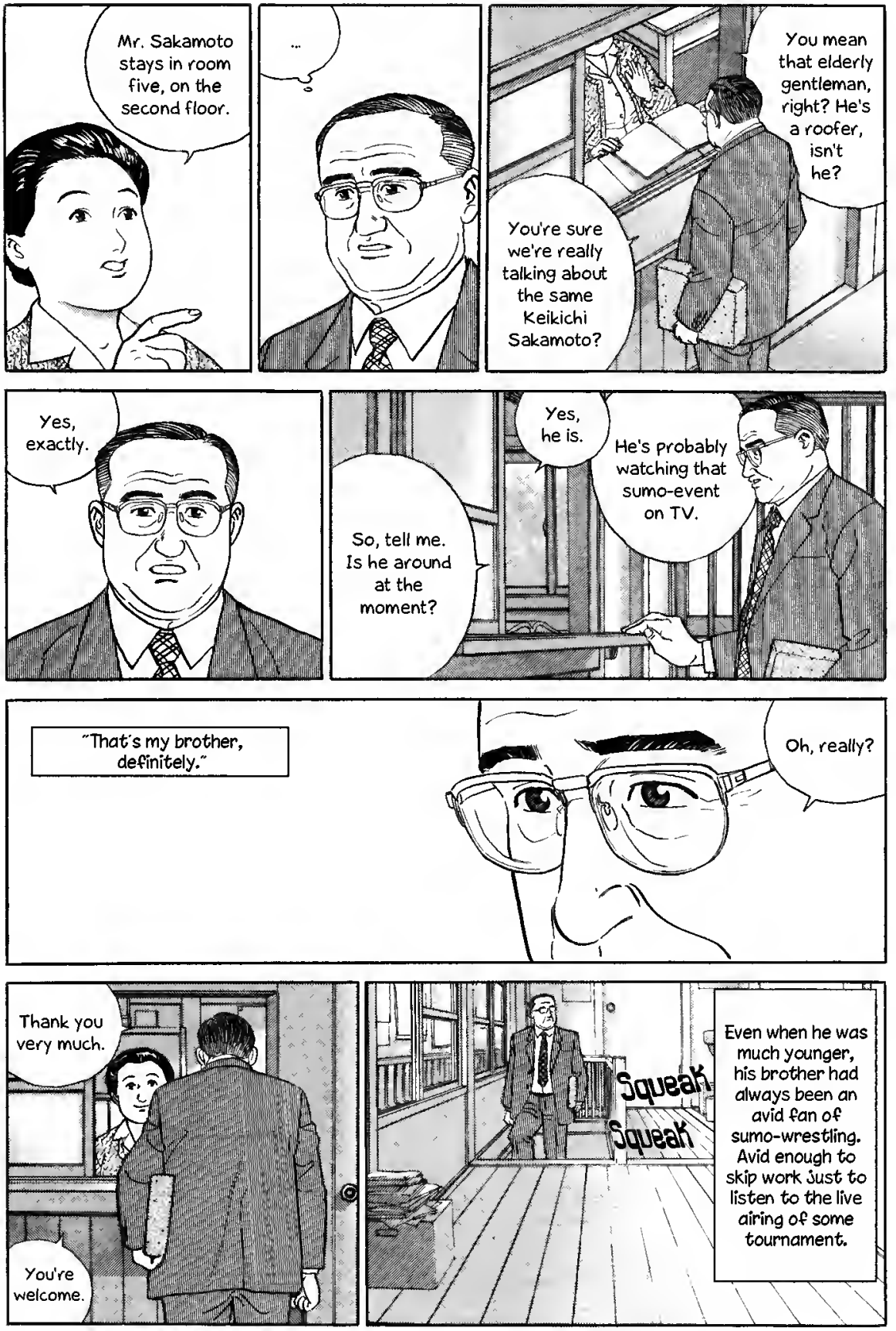





"So, that's how my brother lives."

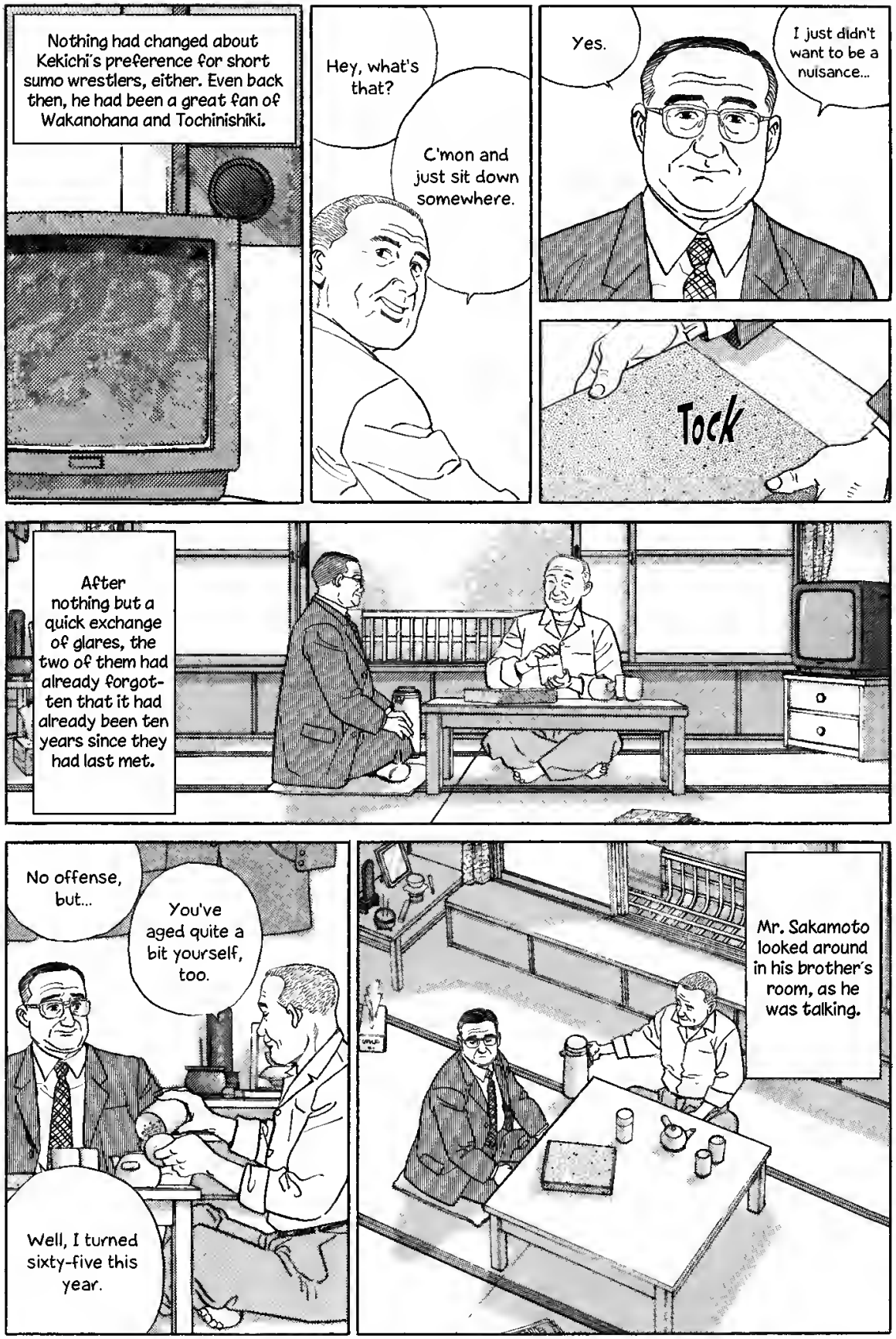
RATTLE
Ah...
Hm?
Does a...
...certain Mr. Sakamoto live around here?
...
No idea. You gotta ask the receptionist.
Oh...
Just a month earlier, Mr. Sakamoto had come to know that his brother was living at some modest motel somewhere in Shinjuku.

He had already known for a long time that his brother had moved out of his son's house to live whatever he felt like.
RATTLE
RATTLE
His brother's girlfriend had died and both of his sons were salarymen, living independently.
Therefore, there should have been no reason to criticize his brother for living on his own. But then, he was already going to turn sixty-nine that year.
Mr. Sakamoto was worried about his brother living a life that unstable, given his age.
It would have troubled him to just leave his brother alone, despite living in the same city.
But maybe seeing him himself aging slowly was another reason.
Excuse me...


Mr. Sakamoto stays in room five, on the second floor.
...
You mean that elderly gentleman, right? He's a roofer, isn't he?
You're sure we're really talking about the same Keikichi Sakamoto?
Yes, exactly.
Yes, he is.
He's probably watching that sumo-event on TV.
So, tell me. Is he around at the moment?
"That's my brother, definitely."
Oh, really?
Thank you very much.
You're welcome.
Squeak
Squeak
Even when he was much younger, his brother had always been an avid fan of sumo-wrestling. Avid enough to skip work just to listen to the live airing of some tournament.

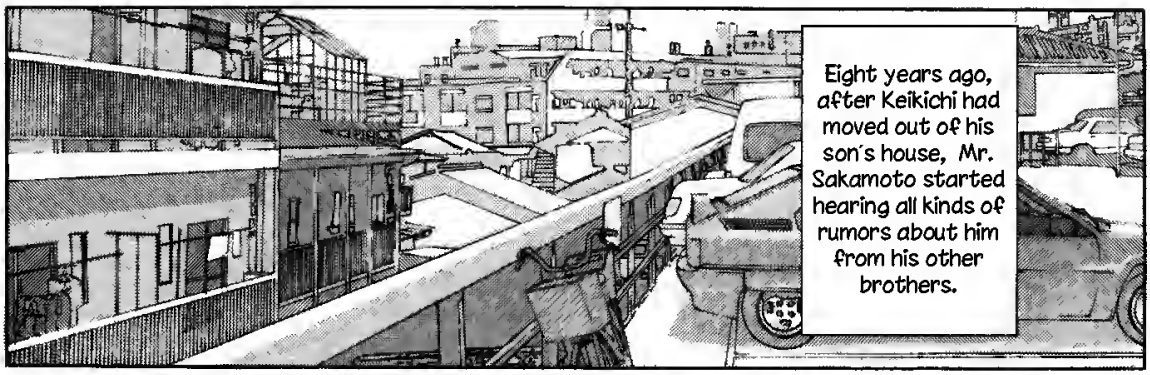
Tock
Tock
...
Walk right in!
Damn, shut it, will ya?!
Tock
Tock
Just when it got interesting...
You...?
Is that you, Seizo?
Long time no see...

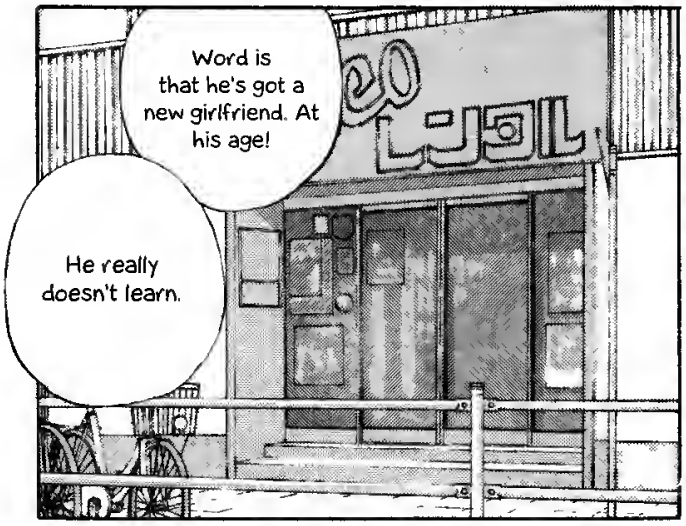
WAAA


Nothing had changed about Kekichi's preference for short sumo wrestlers, either. Even back then, he had been a great fan of Wakanohana and Tochinishiki.
Hey, what's that?
C'mon and just sit down somewhere.
Yes.
I just didn't want to be a nuisance...
Tock
After nothing but a quick exchange of glares, the two of them had already forgotten that it had already been ten years since they had last met.
No offense, but...
You've aged quite a bit yourself, too.
Well, I turned sixty-five this year.
Mr. Sakamoto looked around in his brother's room, as he was talking.

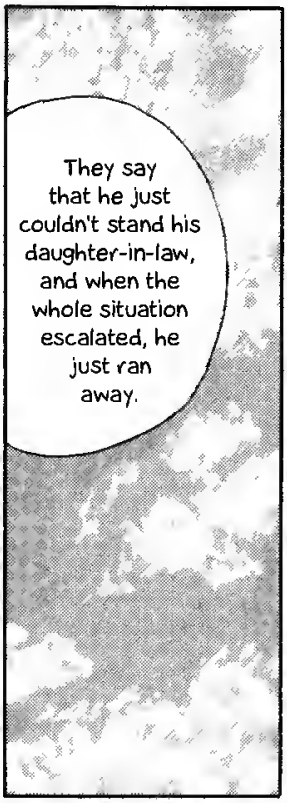
You're still so orderly.
Your room does really look tidy.
Ain't nothing special!
'Tis just more convenient...
...living without all that junk.
So, what 'bout you? Got a job?
No.
I've reached my company's retiring age.
After that, I was employed at another company, but they threw me out two years ago.
So you're finally enjoying your life as a retiree?
Didn't you have two kids, too?
First a daughter and then a son, right?
Yes... We're living with my son's family these days.

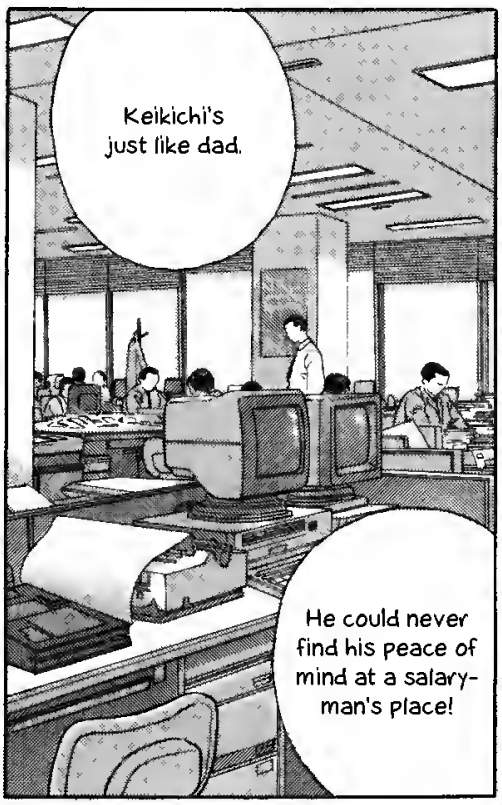
Your wife's all right, too?
Well, yes...
She's taking care of our grandchildren.
And you?
You're just relaxing all day?
Hmm... probably that, yes.
That sucks.
Slurp
It makes you grow old!
And you're still so young. Four years younger than me!
...
Look at me, I'm still lively.
I'm climbing roofs and working.
Well, takes you aback, doesn't it?
...
Yeah... kind of.


Eight years ago, after Keikichi had moved out of his son's house, Mr. Sakamoto started hearing all kinds of rumors about him from his other brothers.


Word is that he's got a new girlfriend. At his age!
He really doesn't learn.

That's what the second oldest of the brothers, owner of a shop he had taken over from his father in law, had told.


They say that he just couldn't stand his daughter-in-law, and when the whole situation escalated, he just ran away.


Keikichi's just like dad.
He could never find his peace of mind at a salary-man's place!

That, the youngest brother, a local official about to retire, said.

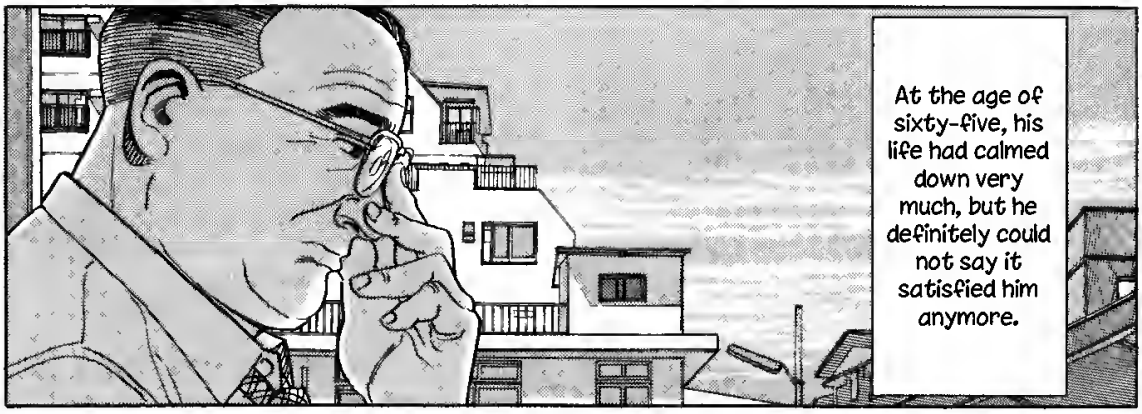
Three of the four brothers became independent of the family early on. Among them was Mr. Sakamoto, who started working at a trading company after his graduation from university.
Since the oldest brother had taken over the family's business, the others had had to look out for jobs elsewhere.
Or, to put it differently, the younger ones could do whatever they felt like, while Keikichi had been forced into agreeing with the takeover.
That's just how it worked back in the day, when the oldest son would naturally take over the family's business. Just that it was quite the fail in Keikichi's case...
Climbing roofs all year long, in any wind and weather... That's just not my cup of tea...
The younger ones would often talk like that.
Might be a bit mean to Keikichi to say this... but to still depend on rain and sunshine in this day and age...
You know any young man to voluntarily take on a job like that? None, right?

That's why nobody was suprised when Keikichi's sons said that they were not going to take over the business, either.
Mr. Sakamoto came to think that Keikichi's discontent about this might be another reason for not living at his son's.
He almost pitied Keikichi for his stubbornness about the business.
Munch
Munch
Tock
Tock
Oh, who's that?
C'mon in!
Kachack
Ah, it's you.

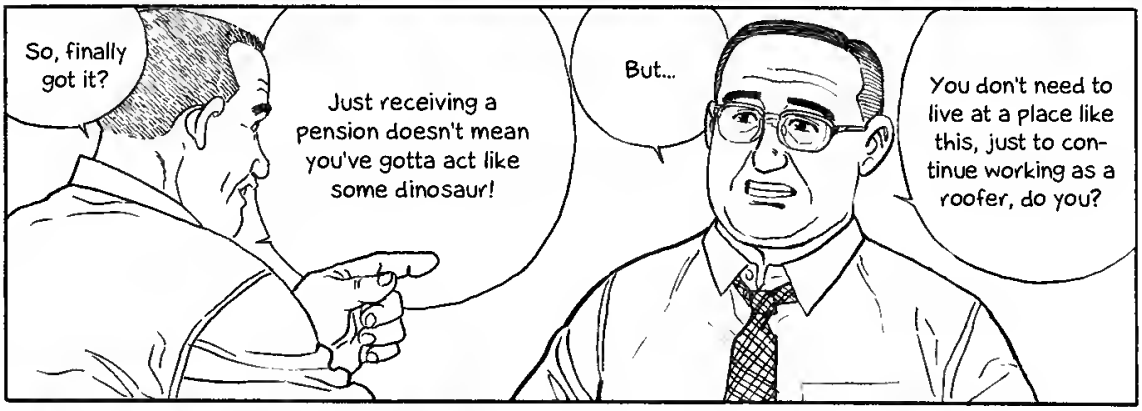
That's my younger brother, by the way...
What's up?
So, get in already!
...
Nah.
'Tis all right.
If you think so.
See ya.
That's my neighbor.
He wanted to check out who you are.
Btamm
He worried so much about me, that he even came back from the sento early.
Note: Sento - bath house
What's the worrying for?
...
He probably thought you were gonna try to make me leave.
My son's already sent somebody once; stirred up quite the trouble back then.

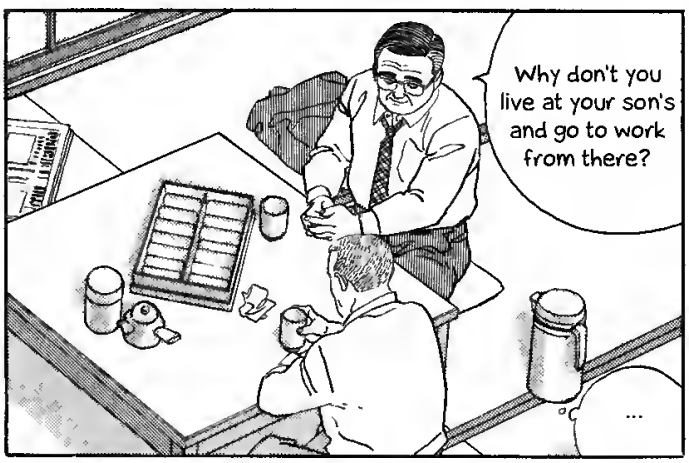
That "somebody" had been, without a doubt, the second oldest brother. He himself had told Mr. Sakamoto about how he had visited Keikichi and tried to make him return at his nephew's request about a month ago.
So, you've come here to talk me into some bullshit, too?
No...
I haven't, but...
So, you're gonna tell me I should move back, too?
Well, wouldn't that be better for you?
You really want me to return to my son's place just to waste my days idling around with my grandchildren?
Not to speak of my pension...
I'm living a modest life, but at least I'm not living off anybody's money.
Nah!
No chance!
...

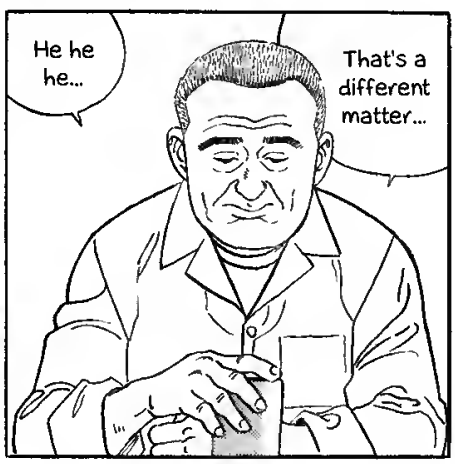
Keikichi was still as feisty as he had always been.
I'm paying my meals with my own hard-earned money.
But you won't stay healthy forever.
Everybody grows fragile eventually.
So what?! I'm supposed to do nothing all day and live off my son while I'm still totally fit? Fuck that, really!
Don't you tell me you're happy.
Is that...
...really enough for you, day in and day out?
Mr. Sakamoto was left speechless.


At the age of sixty-five, his life had calmed down very much, but he definitely could not say it satisfied him anymore.

Society had just forced him into a retiree's role, even if he still felt totally up to working.

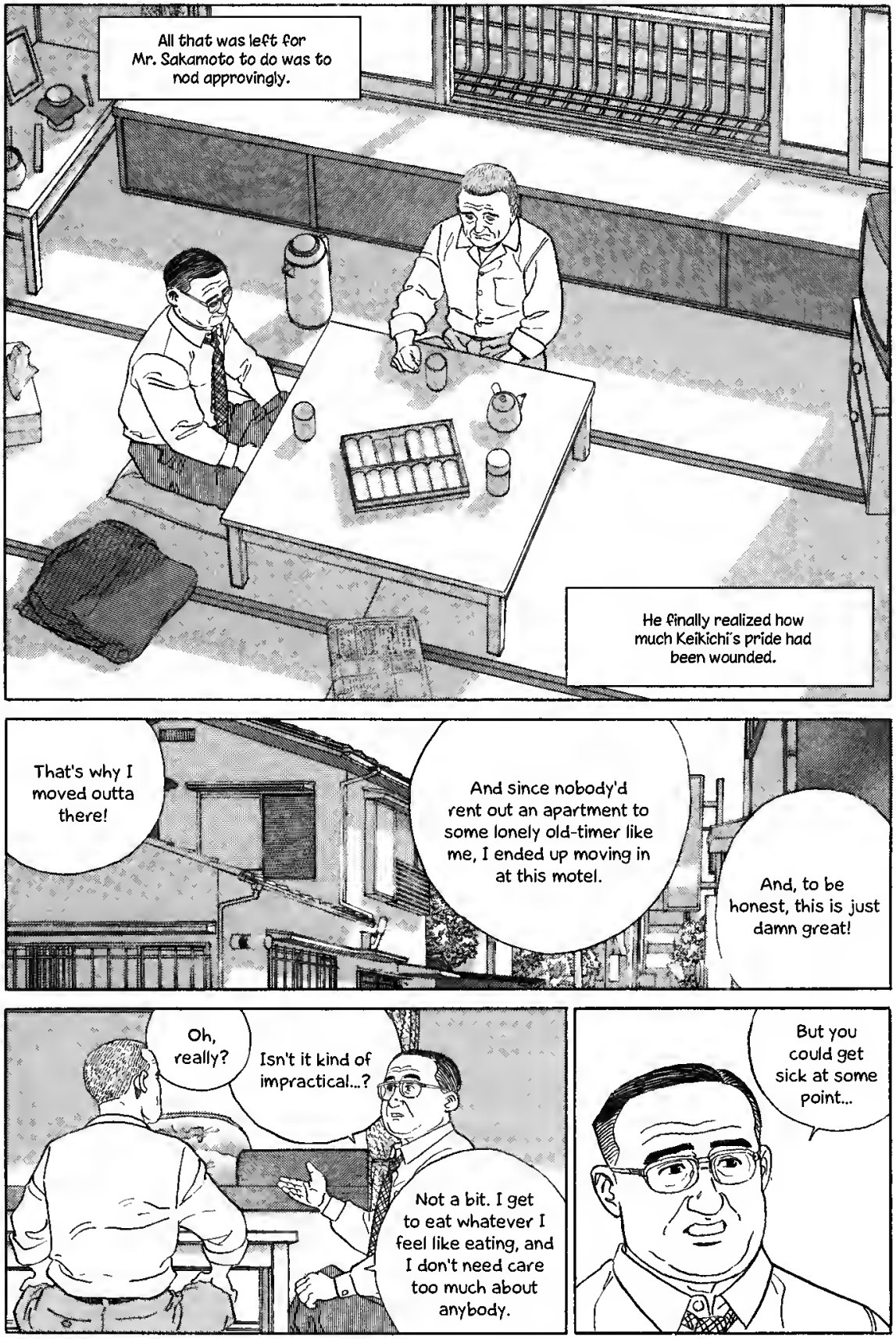

So, finally got it?
Just receiving a pension doesn't mean you've gotta act like some dinosaur!
But...
You don't need to live at a place like this, just to continue working as a roofer, do you?


Why don't you live at your son's and go to work from there?
...


He he he...
That's a different matter...

...to move into his own, pretty house, I really thought it was a good idea at first.
Even back when dad was still alive, we always lived at rented flats, and when my son asked me...
...
But then I started to feel more and more constricted.
In the beginning, everything went well...
Puh
That moment, Mr. Sakamoto saw a shadow of loneliness showing up on his brother's face.
Slurp
Keikichi turned up his mouth und finally stopped talking. Slowly, he sipped on his cold tea.

They wanted me to stop it.
When I left the house with my tools and...
...my work clothes on, to go working...
Who wanted you to stop?
...
Every-body!
My son, his wife, the kids...
They said I'd make them lose face in front of their neigh-bors...
It's our family's business!
...
Our family's been roofers forever! Who do they think they are to talk like that?


All that was left for Mr. Sakamoto to do was to nod approvingly.
He finally realized how much Keikichi's pride had been wounded.
That's why I moved outta there!
And since nobody'd rent out an apartment to some lonely old-timer like me, I ended up moving in at this motel.
And, to be honest, this is just damn great!
Oh, really?
Isn't it kind of impractical...?
Not a bit. I get to eat whatever I feel like eating, and I don't need care too much about anybody.
But you could get sick at some point...

I'll just get myself hospitalized, basta.
I've got some savings for that case.
But to prevent that, I'm taking good care of my health every day.
Pff
Keikichi proudly gave himself a pat on his chest.
He looked much healthier than Mr. Sakamoto, who was suffering from his lack of exercise, anyway.
Tell me, why don't you move in here, too?
Skip it!
You know well enough that I can't.
Hm...
That sucks.
So, you're really gonna go on living like that forever?

Mr. Sakamoto felt as if he had just been slapped hard.
I'm sorry that I didn't have anything better to serve.
Back in the day, I'd have invited you out for some drinks.
Anyway, there's nothing better than a hot bath and going to sleep early, if you wanna be fit the next day.
Indeed.

We'll get going to the sento now.
Since it didn't work the first time, right.
The man suspiciously glared at Mr. Sakamoto.
He probably still thought he had come over to make Keikichi return.
And you, make sure to get a job and work.
Yes.
カリス
It's for your own sake!
It's not for anybody else!
Well.
See you!
Keikichi turned around and went away with his neighbor.

He didn't even turn around once.
No matter his age, Keikichi would always stay the same.
And there Mr. Sakamoto stood in the half-dark backstreet, watching his brother, as young at heart as ever, leave.

1008 Scans

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